

COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY 14697

bone or muscle disease, digestive, endocrine or urinary impairments. Although few drugs have been definitely linked to human birth defects, many are under suspicion. Even aspirin, readily available and massively consumed, has been associated with congenital malformation in experimental animals and with an increased stillbirth rate and a significantly reduced birth weight in humans.

Several alarming studies of the use of drugs by pregnant women suggest that the problem is that drug-taking is our cultural pattern. According to two prospective studies published in 1963 and 1964 pregnant American women took on the average of four different drugs per woman during the first trimester of pregnancy. In a more recent Scottish survey of 911 pregnant women, 65% took over-the-counter drugs, 2.2 on the average per woman. Eighty-two per cent took drugs prescribed by their physicians, each woman taking an average of four different drugs including iron, analgesics, vitamins, barbiturates, diuretics, antiemetics, antibiotics, sulfonamides, cough medicines, antihistamines, hormones, tranquilizers, bronchodilators, hypnotics and appetite suppressants. Unfortunately, the situation with American women has worsened in the last decade. A recent study of middle and upper class Texas women indicated that they took from 3 to 29 different drugs with the mean increased to 10.3 drugs per woman. Pediatricians used to be terribly concerned that the child was to be delivered into a sea of bacteria. I am concerned that the fetus is being incubated in a sea of drugs.

Since most of these drugs were not prescribed to support or save the pregnancy or to save the mother's life and since the effects of so many drugs on the fetus are poorly understood, administration of